

Statement by Senator Pamela Wallin
For delivery August 12, 2013

This morning I was given a copy of the Deloitte report, which will be tabled at the Senate Committee in a few minutes. It is my view that this report is the result of a fundamentally flawed and unfair process.

When appointed to the Senate in 2009, I was determined to be an activist Senator, one who saw it as her job to advance causes that are important to Canadians. When invited to appear publicly and speak on subjects including the role of women in public life, Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and support for our troops, I saw it as my duty to accept whenever able to do so. Travel to these public speeches and appearances was, and is, in my continuing view, a legitimate Senate expense.

However, in the Deloitte report, a number of expenses going back to 2009 that were submitted – and approved – by Senate Finance over a four year period have now been disallowed.

Deloitte has wrongly, in my view and in the opinion of my lawyers, applied the 2012 changes made to the Senators' Travel Policy retroactively. The result is that travel expenses, which were approved and paid by Senate Finance in 2009, 2010 and 2011 have, in a number of cases, been disallowed.

The basis for this latter decision is apparently some arbitrary and undefined sense of what constitutes "Senate business" or "common Senate practice" and – by their own admission – no inquiries were made of other Senators as to their definition or views on the subject.

Finally, Deloitte has identified a number of items that they say are "subject to interpretation." In other words, Deloitte was unable to conclude that these expenses should not be allowed. That determination will now be made by the Senate Committee.

I want to be absolutely clear. I never intended to seek, nor sought reimbursement for travel expenses in any situation where I did not believe such a claim was proper. Where I made mistakes, I have already paid money back.

There are media reports today that I changed my electronic calendar after the audit started. Let me be clear – at no time did I attempt to mislead Deloitte in any way. I was advised part way through the process that I should only include information relevant to the actual expenses being claimed. So we formatted our calendar accordingly and added as much additional information as we had regarding the claims, without irrelevant, private or personal information included. We knew that Deloitte had a copy of the original calendars available to them at all times.

It was not until very late in the process – in July – that we were asked about differences between the office calendars and so we told them what had happened and why – and followed up with a written explanation, which is attached to the Deloitte report as an appendix – and we immediately supplied them my personal, handwritten diaries for the entire period. As I said, no attempt was made to mislead Deloitte.

While I have serious concerns about the fairness of this process, I do not want to further burden the people of Saskatchewan, the Canadian public, or my Senate colleagues any more with this matter. I want to return my focus to representing the people of my home province and advocating for the causes that are close to my heart.

Finally, let me state clearly that I will pay back the full amount ordered by the Committee, including interest, once the final figure is given to me, and I will do so from my own resources.

I need now to attend the Committee addressing the auditor's report. Until the Committee completes its report, there is nothing more I am able to say.

Thank you.